

HISTORIC ALEXANDRIA RESOURCES COMMISSION ANNUAL REPORT

for

FISCAL YEAR 2019: JUNE 2018 – JULY 2019

I. SUMMARY

In FY 2019, the Historic Alexandria Resources Commission (HARC) continued to meet throughout the year rather than entertain a summer hiatus. This schedule was necessitated by the number and range of issues that should be addressed by the commission and the need for prompt attention to new issues as they arise. To accommodate better the commissioners' schedules and other obligations, meetings continue to convene earlier in the evening and aggressive efforts are made to conclude business within two hours. To aid in efficient and effective attention to the issues addressed by the Commission, several committees continue their efforts.

While some briefings are scheduled for significant issues facing HARC, the number of such briefings is held to a minimum and the presenters are allocated only limited time for their presentations. Emphasis is placed on discussion of issues relevant to the HARC mission and goals. Also, deliberations consistently address whether HARC positions should be communicated to other organizations relevant to historic preservation and other areas of concern or other actions should be taken.

II. OPERATING PROCESSES

Meetings convene at 7:00 pm on the third Tuesday of every month. As was the case for FY 2018, HARC was led by co-chairs and the vice chair and secretary positions were held by individuals. Election of officers for FY 2020 has been postponed until the September meeting because of uncertainty regarding the terms of some of the commissioners. The elected co-chairs, Elizabeth McCall and Danny Smith, alternated presiding at the meetings and conducted the business of HARC in full, continual and open consultation. Maddy McCoy was elected to the position of vice chair, and Steve Stuart was elected secretary. The meeting agendas prepared by the co-chairs were designed to promote efficient and effective deliberation, and meetings are managed to conclude deliberations by 9:00 pm if possible.

III. COMMITTEES

The following committees, established during FY 2017 and FY 2018 continued their work in FY 2019:

A. Office of Historic Alexandria and Planning Support Committee

Linda Lovell, Chair
Stephen Stuart
Laura Lieberman

B. Advocacy Committee

Martha Harris, Chair
Tobin Tracy (term expired during FY 2019)
Gail Rothrock
Bill Hendrickson
Richard Klingenmaier

C. Educational Outreach Committee

John Dumsick, Chair
Jolande Goldberg
Keith Lawson Moore

D. Finance Committee

Danny Smith, Chair
Martha Harris
Keith Lawson Moore
Linda Lovell

E. Nominating Committee

Linda Lovell, Chair
Laura Lieberman
Stephen Stuart

HARC members joined existing Waterfront History related committees established by the Alexandria Archaeological Commission, in particular the African-American Heritage Trail Committee which includes two current HARC commissioners and one former member. In addition, HARC members have participated in the AAC's Waterfront History Plan Implementation Committee, weighing in on history content for King Street Interim Park.

IV. HARC ACTIVITIES

In the past year, HARC continued to limit the number and duration of briefings and presentations to conserve valuable meeting time for commission business. This emphasis allowed more time for identifying current and anticipated issues relevant to historic preservation and other HARC priorities, discussing those issues as needed, and developing any appropriate actions. Following are descriptions of the more significant issues addressed by HARC during FY 2018.

- A. Justice Black House (619 South Lee Street) – HARC was advised in June of 2018 that the owner of this property proposed to make alterations that are inconsistent with the historic easement placed on the property by Justice Black when he was the owner. Extensive efforts were undertaken to encourage adherence to the easement including written and face-to-face communication with the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (holder of the easement), written and oral statements to the Board of Architectural Review, individual meetings with the Mayor and individual City Council members, and written and oral statements to the Mayor and City Council. The issue is now being adjudicated in the courts as a result of an appeal by the Historic Alexandria Foundation and is being monitored by HARC.
- B. Elected Officials Orientation – Because many of the incoming elected city officials for 2019 are serving their initial terms, HARC developed a briefing package on historic properties, preservation, the missions and processes for various organizations, and other information relevant to historic preservation. The co-chairs arranged and conducted one-on-one briefings and provided written copies of the orientation materials to the Mayor and Council members. In addition, the elected officials were invited to attend the HARC Christmas party to help develop relationships with them and several of them accepted.
- C. National Register of Historic Places – In response to proposed changes to the regulations for nomination of sites for the register, HARC submitted comments to the National Park Service objecting to many of the proposed changes on the grounds that the changes would significantly hamper nomination of future sites for the register.
- D. Small Cell Networks (5G) – City staff alerted HARC to the looming threat to the historic integrity of historic portions of Alexandria represented by development of the advanced 5G networks mandated by federal law. The HARC co-chairs attended an information briefing organized by personnel from the City Manager’s office which included briefings by companies who might install the equipment for the systems and who might provide services through the installations. While it appears that there is very little that localities can do to limit degradation of historic integrity, HARC continues to monitor the issue including inspection of the initial installations when they occur.
- E. Parking Kiosks in Historic Areas – The city initiatives and experiments to control better the parking situation, especially in Old Town, have included designating certain new areas as pay parking except for residents. As a consequence, machines for dispensing parking permits have been placed in some of the pay parking areas and detract from the historic character of some areas. HARC is monitoring those developments and is discouraging the placement of the kiosks in historic areas. If kiosks must be installed, HARC is encouraging placement to minimize the detraction.

- F. Electric Scooters – The city experiment with electric scooter rentals presents issues similar to parking kiosks. HARC has identified one of its members to specifically focus on that issue and to report significant developments.
- G. Open Space Policy – The city is in the process of revamping its open space policy and has identified HARC as a key participant on the steering committee for that process. The city staffer managing the effort provided a briefing to HARC, and one of the co-chairs volunteered to serve as our participant until a permanent representative from HARC is selected.
- H. Christ Church Plans for Washington Street Annex – HARC has been advised that Ross Dress for Less (current tenant of the Christ Church property adjacent to their church facilities) has decided that they will not renew their lease. Christ Church leadership has decided to offer a long term lease for that ground and allow it to be developed for purposes acceptable to the church and any interested developer. HARC sent a letter to the rector explaining our mission in historic preservation and offering to assist in working through the historic preservation requirements and guidance applicable to the site. HARC is especially interested in verifying that the church is aware of the special guidance provided by the memorandum of understanding between Alexandria and the National Park Service regarding the portion of the George Washington Parkway located in Alexandria (i.e., Washington Street).
- I. Violation of Historic Preservation Requirements – The BAR determined that a resident at 420 South Lee Street has not complied with the provisions of a permit granted in 2012 to remove a portion of the brick foundation of an iron fence at the front of the house and adjacent to the public sidewalk. The issue is now being adjudicated in court, and HARC members are monitoring the continued violation and developments.
- J. Freedom House Museum – HARC is aware that operations of the Freedom House Museum located in the building on Duke Street housing the Northern Virginia Urban League might be in jeopardy. The Office of Historic Alexandria now operates the museum and negotiations continue for a permanent arrangement that will protect and preserve the museum. Members of HARC monitored the initiative by private individuals to nominate the property as one of the Eleven Most Endangered Historic Properties as selected by the National Trust for Historic Preservation. While the property was not selected for the 2019 list, NTHP staff encouraged nomination of the property for the 2020 list.
- K. Combined Sewer Outfalls – HARC has established contact points within Alexandria RENEW to promote full awareness of ongoing and proposed activities and expedient communication regarding actual and potential historic preservation risks. HARC has monitored the issue carefully because of the potential that this major construction activity in and near the Old and Historic Alexandria District could cause damage to historic

structures. A final route for the main north-south tunnel has not been announced. However, geologic testing being conducted under the river indicates that route, which would reduce the potential for impacts to historic structures, is being seriously studied.

- L. Combined BARs – City Council directed that staff explore combining the Boards of Architectural Review for the two historic districts in Alexandria – the Old and Historic Alexandria District and the Parker-Gray District. HARC examined information related to the proposed change, discussed the issue, and members attended the related public meetings. Based on those activities, HARC elected to support the change and submitted a letter to the Office of Historic Preservation supporting the plan.
- M. Equal Justice/ Freedom Initiative – Alexandria has been identified by the Equal Justice Initiative as the site of two lynchings of African Americans. In support of the EJI, a local activist interested in the issue was invited to attend a HARC meeting to participate in discussions but declined to attend. The issue is being handled, in large part, by the Office of Historic Alexandria and HARC has offered to help as requested in those efforts.
- N. Waterfront History Plan Implementation and African-American Heritage Trail – HARC devoted significant attention to the controversy related to the naming of the new park developed at the foot of King Street. Based on meetings attended, information provided, and exploration of other sources of information, HARC developed a recommendation and submitted it to city staff as requested. When a firm (SOFTlab) was selected to create the first art installation for the interim park, HARC sent a letter to the firm offering to assist in any way requested to provide background on Alexandria's history as a context for the installation. Related to the history plan, HARC is also monitoring the design and implementation of the first history trails which form a key component of the Waterfront History Plan and are also anchored to the Interim Park area. These first trails will focus on African-American History, but the templates and technologies developed will be used for a wide range of similar trails with other themes.
- O. Alfred Street Baptist Church – The Alfred Street Baptist Church has proposed a major enlargement of their facility bounded by Alfred, Duke, Patrick, and Wolfe Streets. Apparently, soil and geology issues have arisen that have delayed the expansion plans, but HARC continues to monitor the issue.

V. GOALS FOR FY2019

- A. HARC has been monitoring applications docketed for presentation to the BAR and providing input as appropriate. That activity will continue in FY 2020.
- B. HARC will also continue to monitor appeals of BAR decisions to the City Council and provide input to those deliberations as appropriate.

- C. HARC will continue to monitor proposed changes to the building code by the Commonwealth of Virginia that could impact historic preservation efforts and provide relevant input to the process.
- D. Plans for expansion of the Alfred Street Baptist Church and development at Christ Church will be monitored as progress is made by the church. Input from the church will be encouraged as their plans are better defined.
- E. As the Combined Sewer Outfall Project evolves, HARC will monitor the plans and implementation to identify threats to preservation and will seek changes that eliminate the threats or mitigating actions to reduce the impacts.
- F. Enforcement of easements protection historic properties has recently precipitated some issues. HARC will continue to monitor developments and will seek to identify effective processes for enforcement of historic easements.
- G. The Torpedo Factory is one of the premier resident artist facilities in the nation. HARC will monitor developments at this historic facility related to the artists' association and city functions with the goal of enhancing its long-term viability as a key historic attraction in Alexandria.
- H. HARC will continue to monitor various threats to the integrity of historic areas including 5G networks, electric scooter rentals, parking kiosks, and the combined sewer outfalls construction project.
- I. Continue to advocate for and assist in creating a preservation masterplan, and a building/materials/streetscape inventory in collaboration with OHA staff and the Preservation Office of the Department of Planning and Zoning

VI. COMMISSION OFFICERS, MEMBERS AND AFFILIATIONS

A. Officers

Co-Chairs: Elizabeth (Indy) McCall
 Danny Smith
 Vice Chair: Maddy McCoy
 Secretary: Stephen Stuart

B. Members and Affiliations

John Dumsick – Carlyle House
 Shawn Eyer – George Washington Masonic Memorial
 Jolande Goldberg – Torpedo Factory Artists Association
 Martha Harris – Volunteer (Historic Alexandria Docents)

Bill Hendrickson – Planning District II
Michael Hobbs – Civic Association At-Large (Old Town Civic Association)
Richard Klingenmaier – Alexandria Association
Laura Lieberman – Lee-Fendall House
Linda Lovell – Mortar and Pestle Society (Alexandria Historic Landmark Society)
Paul Mazzuca – Planning District III
Elizabeth McCall – Alexandria Archaeological Commission
Maddy McCoy – Planning District II
Keith Moore – Christ Church
Severiano Ortiz – Alexandria Historical Society
Deborah Osborne – Alexandria Historical Restoration and Preservation Commission
Gail Rothrock – Historic Alexandria Foundation
Monica St. Dennis – Public Records Advisory Commission
Danny Smith – Business Representative
Stephen Stuart – Planning District III

C. Vacancies:

Visit Alexandria (Alexandria Convention and Visitors Association Board of Governors)
Alexandria Society for the Preservation of Black Heritage
Northern Virginia Fine Arts Association
Business Representative (Chamber of Commerce)
Planning District I (2 members)
Old Presbyterian Meeting House